November 12, 1995
Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago
John M. Buchanan, Pastor

I participated in an extraordinary event yesterday. I was invited by Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, Executive Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, to be part of a small delegation to go to Washington and meet with the President. The National Council of Churches General Board, on which I sit as a representative of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) met in Oakland, California last week and passed a resolution asking the President and Congress on behalf of the Churches who are members of the Council, to remember the poor, the vulnerable, the sick and elderly and the children as the current budget negotiations are carried out.

So yesterday I was part of a small group which met with the President. My specific responsibility was to represent urban churches which do good work but which cannot, alone, fill the gaps in absolutely necessary services to the homeless, poor, sick and elderly currently under consideration for reduction or elimination.

This is a defining moment for America. There is much non-partisan consensus about the budget:

- that it must be brought into balance;
- that it ought to stimulate the rethinking and renewal of the welfare system;
- that it ought to promote and foster economic growth.

What the NCC said was that while fostering individual responsibility and community accountability it ought also help provide for the neediest and most vulnerable of our citizens.

On behalf of the churches we urged the President to veto any budget that backs away from responsibility for the needy. We told him it was not a partisan, political issue, but a moral and theological issue and the NCC will ask for an opportunity to say the same thing to Mr. Dole and Mr. Gingrich.

At the end of our time with him, Bishop Nathaniel Linsey of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church prayed with eloquence and strength.

When I had my few moments with him I said: "Mr. President, Keep the Faith" and I said hat we would pray for him and for our nation this morning and he said "we all need that."

So will you join me now in prayer:

> Almighty and merciful God, Lord of all nations, we pray for our President in this critical hour. Give him strength and courage to be the President of all the people. Give him integrity and determination to do what is right and just and good. We pray for his wife and his daughter. Keep them in Your care.
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> We pray for leaders in congress, our representatives. Bless them with your gifts of discernment, wisdom, fairness and compassion. Help them hold on to a vision of our nation as a city on a hill which enables and empowers all of its people, old and young, rich and poor, sick and healthy, black and white to live in liberty, security and well being.
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> Oh God, bless this nation in this season of Thanksgiving with new resolve to be part of your new creation, to seek justice, to care for the needy, to walk humbly with you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen